



Morning Alert - Wednesday, December 13, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that the GOJ is considering presenting professional shogi player Yoshiharu Habu and professional go player Yuta Iyama with the People's Honor Award for achieving seven major titles. TBS led with a report that the mayor of Awara City, Fukui, has been accused of sexual harassment. TV Asahi reported that according to analysis by 38 North, the DPRK is preparing to conduct another nuclear test. NTV and Fuji TV continued to report on the alleged assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji.

Top stories in national dailies included a GOJ plan to raise medical fees by 0.55% (Asahi); the discovery of late novelist Yasushi Inoue's unpublished diaries (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to give the People's Honor Award to shogi and go champions (Yomiuri); the ruling parties' draft tax reform plan, including a review of the taxation of high-income earners (Nikkei); and the ruling parties' draft budget plan for fiscal 2018, including a new system for repaying student loans (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

UNSC discusses North Korea's human rights abuses including abductions

All Tuesday evening papers wrote that the UN Security Council held a meeting on Monday to discuss North Korea's human rights abuses. This is the fourth year in a row for the council to discuss the issue. Although China insisted that the council is not a venue for discussing the issue and China, Russia, and Bolivia voted against the idea of discussing it at the council, ten countries, including the United States and Japan, backed the move. Ethiopia and Egypt abstained. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley stated that many Japanese and other countries' nationals have been abducted by North Korea. Japanese Ambassador Bessho said a 13-year-old girl was among the victims of the

abductions and that some of the family members of the abductees have passed away before they were able to see their loved ones again. However, North Korea's UN Mission released a statement saying that the council is taking up a human rights issue that does not exist in the DPRK.

In a related development, Sankei reported on remarks made to the press on Tuesday by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, during which he commented on the recent deaths of Charles Jenkins and Nobuko Masumoto. Jenkins was a former U.S. soldier who deserted to North Korea and later married Japanese abductee Hitomi Soga, and Masumoto was the mother of abductee Rumiko Masumoto. Suga reportedly said that it is extremely regrettable that the GOJ could not realize the return of any more abductees after five of them were returned to Japan.

GOJ having difficulty dealing with North Korean boats washing up on Japanese shores

Asahi front-paged a report on the numerous North Korean fishing boats that have washed up on the northwest shores of Japan this year, some of whose crewmembers were dead. Seventy-nine boats have been found this year, almost reaching the level of 2013 when 80 were reported. Japanese authorities have recovered 19 bodies and taken 42 crewmembers into custody. The paper wrote that local governments and police are having difficulty in dealing with the crewmembers, corpses, and wreckage. Saying that the fishermen appear unlikely to be agents, the paper speculated that they probably came to fishing grounds near Japan despite the rough seas in response to orders from the Kim regime to increase fishing revenue.

Foreign Minister Kono pledges Japan's support for Iraqi reconstruction

Tuesday evening's Mainichi ran a Kyodo report on Foreign Minister Kono's meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi in Paris on Monday, during which he pledged Japan's support for Iraq's efforts to rebuild following its recent declaration that it has reclaimed territory taken by ISIL. Kono said the victory over the militant group is the result of the Iraqi people having overcome ethnic and religious differences to unite and that Japan wants to continue to contribute to Iraq's recovery and national reconciliation.

Osaka to decide as early as today to end sister-city relationship with San Francisco

Yomiuri wrote that the city assembly of Osaka adopted at a plenary session on Tuesday a resolution against San Francisco's acceptance of the donation of comfort woman statues. The paper speculated that the city of Osaka will likely make an official decision as early as today to end its sister-city relationship with San Francisco, quoting Mayor Yoshimura as telling reporters after the assembly session that it is significant that the assembly expressed clear opposition. Meanwhile, the paper also reported that San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee, who approved the San Francisco city assembly's decision to accept the statues, passed away on Tuesday.

SECURITY

Defense Ministry increases cost estimate for Aegis Ashore to 100 billion yen per unit

Asahi wrote that the Ministry of Defense told an LDP meeting on Tuesday that the Aegis Ashore system will likely cost just under 100 billion yen per unit compared with the previous estimate of 80 billion yen. The ministry will allocate a total of about 200 billion yen to implement its plan to introduce two of the missile defense systems. Mainichi front-paged a similar report adding that the cost of the Aegis Ashore may increase because the GOJ may have to purchase the system from the United States at its asking price under the Foreign Military Sales system. The paper also wrote that the GOJ's spending for ballistic missile defense since fiscal 2004 will likely reach 2 trillion yen in fiscal 2018.

Futenma relocation to be key issue in Nago mayoral election in February

Asahi wrote that Futenma relocation will be the major campaign issue in the Nago mayoral election to be held on Feb. 4. The election will likely be a head-to-head race between incumbent Mayor Inamine, who opposes the Henoko plan, and former LDP-backed city assembly member Toguchi. The paper wrote that the Abe administration is determined to win the mayoral race ahead of the gubernatorial election to be held next fall. Noting that although the headquarters of the Komeito Party supports the existing Futenma relocation project but its local chapter insists that the base should be relocated out of the prefecture or Japan, the paper speculated that Komeito's moves will hold the key to the outcome of the mayoral election. Yomiuri ran a similar report.

POLITICS

Democratic Party leader proposes idea on disbanding party

All Tuesday evening papers wrote that Democratic Party President Otsuka proposed a meeting on party reform on Tuesday several ideas for the future of the party, including disbanding it and forming a new party or changing the name of the party and keeping it as is. The ideas will be presented to a party executive meeting for discussion on Wednesday with the goal of making a final decision by the end of this year.

SCIENCE

FM Kono expresses Japan's readiness to host confab on climate change next year

Yomiuri wrote that during his address to the Climate Change Summit in a Paris suburb on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Kono expressed Japan's readiness to host a new international conference on climate change in 2018 to discuss measures to help developing nations combat the issue.

